

The U.S. Embassy and Consulates Announce a New Visa Processing System

As part of the U.S. Department of State's continuing efforts to streamline the visa process worldwide, U.S. Embassy and Consulates across India are implementing a new visa processing system that will further standardize our procedures and will simplify fee payment and appointment scheduling through our new website at www.ustraveldocs.com/in.

Beginning September 26, U.S. visa applicants will be able to pay application fees via Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT) or with their mobile phones. They can also pay in cash at more than 1,800 Axis bank branches.

For the first time, applicants will be able to schedule their appointments online or by phone. The new system will also allow companies and travel agents to purchase multiple fee receipts for group travel, and it accommodates the scheduling of group and emergency appointments.

Visa applicants will be able to contact us via telephone, email, or online chat. Call center agents in Noida and Hyderabad will answer questions in Hindi, English, Punjabi, Gujarati, Tamil, and Telugu. Our call centers will be open 8:00 am to 8:00 pm Monday through Friday, and 9:00 am to 6:00 pm on Sunday. The numbers are (91-120) 660-2222 or (91-22) 6720-9400 in India or 1-310-616-5424 in the United States. Applicants can email us in English or Hindi at support-india@ustraveldocs.com, or they can chat with us directly from our website (www.ustraveldocs.com/in) during call center hours.

One important change is that under the new system, applicants will have to make two appointments. Prior to their visa interviews, applicants will have to visit an Offsite Facilitation Center (OFC) to submit their fingerprints and a photo. Located apart from the Embassy and Consulates in Delhi, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, and Mumbai, the OFCs will reduce congestion at our consular facilities and speed applicant processing. Most applicants will need to visit an OFC only once.

In March, the U.S. Mission in India introduced the Interview Waiver Program (IWP) that allows applicants who meet certain criteria to be considered for waivers of personal interviews. Under the IWP and our new processing system, an increasing number of applicants will be able to complete all visa requirements without having to visit a U.S. Embassy or Consulate at all.

The U.S. Department of State continually strives to improve consular services to meet increased visa demand in India. In 2011, consular officers in India processed nearly seven lakh nonimmigrant visa applications, an increase of more than 11 percent over the previous year. Presently, applicants wait fewer than ten days for visa interview appointments and spend less than one hour at our consular facilities.

For information about the visa application process, please visit www.ustraveldocs.com. To receive regular updates, follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/India.usembassy.